

Rhode Island (Mr. CICILLINE) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CICILLINE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Building Futures, a Providence-based work training program that prepares Rhode Islanders for careers in the construction industry. This program has made a real difference in the lives of 145 Rhode Islanders by placing them in registered apprenticeships as bricklayers, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, and other construction trade apprenticeships. This success is due, in large part, to its dedicated and talented staff, led by director and founder Andrew Cortes.

I was pleased to stand with Andrew as mayor of Providence in 2007 to help launch Building Futures, which has become a national model for work training programs, and recently to be with him and many others to celebrate their success at Building Futures and to hear directly from so many who have benefited from this program who are now holding good-paying jobs in my State.

Addressing the skills gap is one of Rhode Island's and our Nation's most pressing challenges. We know that too many people are searching for good-paying jobs, but too often, even though they are hardworking, they lack the particular skills they need for the jobs that are available.

Building Futures is helping to restore opportunity by bridging the skills gap and strengthening Rhode Island's workforce. Today, I am proud to salute their efforts and congratulate them on a job well done.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from California (Ms. LOFGREN) for 5 minutes.

Ms. LOFGREN. Madam Speaker, I think what we are engaging on today has the potential of being truly historic. We need a vote on immigration reform.

Several weeks ago, I was home in the district I represent. I go home every week. The Secretary of Commerce was visiting in Silicon Valley. She gave a good speech. After she finished her speech, she invited questions. The very first question was from a young man—a scientist—who said this:

I started a company. I am about to hire four Americans. But my visa is up next month. What am I supposed to do?

As I was talking to that young man, another young man came forward—another scientist who has just formed a company. He is about to go into a hiring mode, but his visa was about up.

So when you take a look and listen to the people in Silicon Valley saying we are going to lose jobs in America because we have a dysfunctional immigration system, that shows the problem that we have allowed to fester.

Recently, I met with farmers. They told me that they are not planting crops this year because they can't identify who is going to pick those crops.

About 80 percent of the migrant farmworkers in America are here without their proper documents. Do I think that is a good situation? No, I do not.

A number of years ago, when I chaired the Immigration Subcommittee, we had a wonderful witness, Dr. Richard Land, then the head of the Southern Baptist Convention, and this was his testimony. He said:

We had for many years two signs at the southern border. One sign said, "No Trespassing," and the other sign said, "Help Wanted."

Those farmworkers who are here picking the vegetables that we will enjoy at our meals responded to that "Help Wanted" sign.

Sometimes people say you should do it in the legal way. Get to the end of the line. And this is from someone who was a former immigration lawyer. I used to teach immigration law at the University of Santa Clara. The truth is, there is no line to get into. We have created a dysfunctional system that does not serve American interests.

H.R. 15 is not a perfect bill. No piece of legislation is. But it was a bill that attracted broad bipartisan support in the United States Senate.

This discharge petition says just one thing: Let's have a vote. Why would the Speaker of the House and the Republican leadership refuse to allow this body to have an up-or-down vote on that bill?

A discharge petition is something that has been in the rules of the House for many, many decades. It has been used occasionally in the past to actually un-bottle-up bills that the leadership didn't want the body to vote on. Most recently, campaign finance reform came to the floor of the House because of a discharge petition.

A lot of Members of the House say that they favor immigration reform. Here is an opportunity to hold every Member of this House accountable. If you favor reform of the immigration system, you should favor having an up-or-down vote on H.R. 15. If you favor an up-or-down vote, we expect you, no matter what your party designation, to sign this discharge petition so the House of Representatives may have an opportunity to address this question and vote "yes" or "no" on this bill.

I hope that members of the public who are aware of the need for immigration reform to reform a system that is not serving our economic interests, that is breaking up families and leaving children in foster care while their parents are deported, will call their Members of the House of Representatives and ask them to sign this discharge petition. It is in the rules. It is what we expect.

We need a vote.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GARCIA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GARCIA. Madam Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues for

joining me here today, as well as those advocates tirelessly working for comprehensive immigration reform.

Nine months have passed since the Senate moved on a strongly bipartisan comprehensive immigration bill. In that time, we have heard nothing but excuses and empty promises from the Speaker.

Yesterday, the Congressional Budget Office confirmed what so many of us already know: immigration is a boon for our economy. It will reduce the deficit by nearly \$1 trillion, raise wages, and increase the Nation's productivity. It will make our country richer and create opportunity for all. But because the Speaker refuses to give us a vote, we have seen more families ripped apart, more jobs go overseas, and more people get stuck in a broken, outdated, and inefficient system.

We can't afford to wait any longer for this House to take up immigration reform. The time has come to move this forward.

Immigration reform isn't just the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do. Our country needs it, the American people support it, and there are enough votes today in the House of Representatives to pass it.

I invite all my colleagues to join me in signing the discharge petition so we can finally bring immigration reform to a vote.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. CÁRDENAS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. CÁRDENAS. Madam Speaker, this week, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office told us that the bipartisan, comprehensive immigration reform legislation in this House, H.R. 15, will reduce the deficit by \$900 billion over the next 20 years—\$200 billion in the first decade alone.

In today's economy, immigration reform is a vital lifeblood. By adding 11 million to our workforce here in the United States, our economy will continue driving our recovery. This influx of workers will increase consumption, pushing businesses to grow and hire more employees to meet their new consumers' needs.

Thanks to the Congressional Budget Office's report, we are reminded that bringing 11 million hardworking men and women out of the shadows is not simply a moral battle, it is not only an attempt to legalize millions of hardworking people who are already here in our country, it is an opportunity for us to create employment for our fellow Americans. It will supercharge the economy of this great Nation.

I think it is important for all of America to understand that comprehensive immigration reform is the best thing that we can do for our economy. The economists have reminded us of that. But, unfortunately, ladies and gentlemen, what stands in the way is a